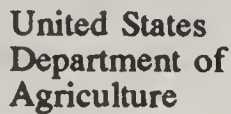


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**Office of  
Public Affairs**

# Selected Speeches and News Releases

## February 13 - February 19, 1992

## IN THIS ISSUE:

## News Releases—

## On the Menu: Rust-No-More Beans

## USDA Establishes Office to Coordinate Food Assistance to Former Soviet Union

## USDA Marketing Specialists to Help CIS

## USDA Announces Special Water Quality Incentive Projects

## New Technique for Examining Colon Cells

## Support Levels, Export Edible Sales Policy Announced for 1992-Crop Peanuts

## Soil Test Identifies Potential Lead Poisoning

## Madigan Announces Establishment of Rural Development Councils

## State Rural Development Councils

## Backgrounder

## How the President's Health Care Plan Helps Farmers



# News Releases

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## ON THE MENU: RUST-NO-MORE BEANS

WASHINGTON, Feb. 13—Rustproof beans for tomorrow's dinner table are sprouting faster because a research program of U.S. Department of Agriculture and university scientists.

"So far we've come up with 53 lines of beans that ward off all 55 identified races, or strains, of the fungus that causes bean rust," said J. Rennie Stavely with USDA's Agricultural Research Service. He said wild beans collected by ARS scientists in Latin America are major sources of rust resistance.

"In a bad year rust can cost \$250 million in losses nationwide," added Stavely, a plant pathologist with the ARS Microbiology and Plant Pathology Laboratory in Beltsville, Md.

He and colleagues at ARS and five universities released 17 highly rust resistant beans from 1984 to 1988 and 36 lines since then. At least five new lines are expected out this year, said Stavely, who coordinates the cooperative bean rust research program.

Commercial breeders are turning the new lines into marketed varieties for growers. This winter, a rust-resistant version of the popular Slenderette green snap bean debuted in supermarket frozen-food cases. The original rust-resistant line was released to breeders by Stavely and a Rutgers University scientist in 1986.

The 53 lines consist of 12 bush-type green snap beans for the fresh market, 18 green snap beans and 12 yellow wax beans for freezing or canning, seven navy dry beans, two pinto and two great northern beans.

The rust fungus is *Uromyces appendiculatus*. "Rust is among the worst diseases of bean plants," Stavely said in the February issue of Agricultural Research Service magazine. Fungicides can reduce infection, but the most widely used fungicide was withdrawn because of environmental concerns, he said.

"Rust rarely kills a bean plant—that would destroy the fungus' only source of reproductive energy," he said. But plants struggle to survive as the fungus robs water and nutrients from leaves and stems, he added.

He said the risk of rust is worst in humid climates such as the



Southeast, mid-Atlantic and parts of the Midwest. In 1991, epidemics struck dry beans in Colorado and snap beans in Florida.

After screening 3,800 strains of beans in the agency's vast collection, Stavely and cooperators found 32 able to withstand all 55 races.

Primitive Latin American strains collected by USDA plant explorers since the 1940's form the basis of many of the rust-resistant lines. Among these lines are four fresh-market snap beans released last July, called BelFla-Rust Resistant-1, -2, -3 and -4. Their resistance, Stavely said, is the first to come from either of two Colombian bean strains, known as Guecito and Capio de Enredadera. The seven navy bean lines got their resistance from beans brought from Guatemala in 1949.

To breed such beans, scientists start by crossing a resistant strain with a commercial variety. In a greenhouse, they challenge each of the offspring of these crosses with at least eight races of rust. Then—at least three times—they backcross fully resistant plants to the commercial variety and retest the offspring. Next, in outdoor plots in bean production areas, the program's cooperating scientists test lines whose resistance is uniformly and reliably inherited.

Besides Stavely's nursery in Beltsville, others are operated by scientists at the University of Florida, Michigan State University, University of Nebraska, Rutgers University, North Dakota State University, University of Tennessee, and Virginia Polytechnic and State University.

Many of the new beans boast more than rust resistance. For example, the majority ward off most North American strains of bean common mosaic virus, the crop's worst virus disease, according to ARS scientist Matt J. Silbernagel. He is based at the ARS Vegetable and Forage Crops Production Research Laboratory, Prosser, Wash.

"If beans are on the menu, the odds are USDA helped put them there," Stavely said in the ARS magazine. "About 95 percent of the dry and snap beans grown in this country have some kind of USDA background in their genetic pedigree. Most also have traits put in by university and state breeders."

Jim De Quattro (301) 504-8648

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## **USDA ESTABLISHES OFFICE TO COORDINATE FOOD ASSISTANCE TO FORMER SOVIET UNION**

WASHINGTON, Feb. 13—The U.S. Department of Agriculture has established an office to coordinate food assistance to the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, Under Secretary of Agriculture Richard T. Crowder said today.

Jim O'Meara has been named to head the office. O'Meara has been temporarily detailed from his position as the director of the U.S. Agency for International Development's Food for Peace Program.

The office will serve as the central contact point for other U.S. government agencies, the Congress, the business community, voluntary organizations and the public on overall U.S. food assistance to the former Soviet Union.

The office also will advise Crowder on the coordination of U.S. government food assistance activities to the region. Crowder is chairman of the U.S. Government's Task Force on Food Assistance to the former Soviet Union,

For more information contact Jim O'Meara, executive director, Secretariat for the Task Force on Food Assistance to the Former Soviet Union, Room 3004-South, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., 20250-1000; telephone (202) 690-0780.

Sally Klusaritz (202) 720-3448

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## **USDA MARKETING SPECIALISTS TO HELP CIS**

WASHINGTON—In an effort to correct inefficiencies fostered by more than 60 years of a state-run food marketing system, two of the independent states of the former Soviet Union have turned to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for help.

USDA is responding by sending a team of marketing specialists to Moscow and Kiev in mid-February to recommend intermediate and long-term methods for stabilizing and modernizing the current food marketing system.

The team will consist of three specialists from USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service and three representatives from the U.S. agriculture



industry. Their aim is to help the Soviets establish a wholesale marketing system for fruits and vegetables, food grain and meats.

“USDA is committed to helping the people of the former Soviet Union set up a marketing system based on what works well in the United States, while factoring in the cultural and logistical realities of those countries,” said AMS Administrator Dan Haley.

“We’re not just sending advisors, or fact finders,” he said. “We’re providing a team of individuals who understand the complexities of a functioning marketing system and know how to build one. We expect the team’s efforts will result in the establishment of functioning wholesale markets for perishable food products within a year.”

Team leader Wes Kriebel, deputy director of AMS transportation and marketing division, said members will concentrate on three areas:

- developing systems for gathering and disseminating market information;

- establishing quality standards based on a common nomenclature to facilitate commerce; and

- setting up mechanisms to ensure that trading rules are being followed.

The team will spend two weeks meeting and working with private and public sector food leaders, ministries of agriculture and representatives from other Russian and Ukrainian institutions.

“Although the main purpose of our trip is to initiate actions that enable Russia and the Ukraine to convert existing systems to a free market system, we’ll also gather information on actions that need to be pursued or revised after we return to the United States,” Kriebel said.

Upon return, the team will identify and prioritize areas needing immediate attention, and identify individuals from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) who might be brought to the United States where they could work with USDA and private sector market development specialists.

Based on reports from recent visits by USDA and private sector offices, the AMS team will face quite a challenge. These reports reveal a significant lack of organized wholesale markets in the food distribution system. High levels of food losses occur between farms and retail outlets due to the absence of product ownership through the state system, structural inefficiencies and bottlenecks throughout the physical distribution system.



“We’ve been told of product losses of 40-50 percent because there is no reliable system for transporting and marketing perishable commodities,” Kriebel said. “Our job is to show these countries how a system with product ownership and profit incentives can result in the effective and efficient movement of farm products.”

Other AMS team members are Paul Fuller, director of the livestock and seed division, and Larry Lace, assistant chief of the fresh products branch.

Private sector members are: Donald Smith, immediate past president of the National Cattlemen’s Association; David Eldridge, vice president of sales and marketing, Tanimura and Antle, Inc., and director of the Produce Marketing Association; and Myron R. Laserson, president of Central Trading Systems, advisor to the Moscow Commodities Exchange and former president of the North American Grain Exchange Association.

Rebecca Unkenholz (202) 720-8998

Issued: Feb. 13, 1992

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## **USDA ANNOUNCES SPECIAL WATER QUALITY INCENTIVE PROJECTS**

WASHINGTON, Feb. 13—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today said the U.S. Department of Agriculture will provide \$6.75 million authorized by the 1990 farm bill to fund payments to producers who want to implement Water Quality Incentive Practices under USDA’s Agricultural Conservation Program.

“This is a new approach to enhance the nation’s water quality,” Madigan said. “It will be implemented by establishing Water Quality Incentive Projects within existing USDA Water Quality Demonstration Projects, Hydrologic Unit Areas, and 1991 Water Quality Special Projects.”

The WQIP provides both technical and financial assistance for producers to change management systems to reduce nonpoint source agricultural pollutants.

A complete farm water quality resource management plan will be developed for producers enrolled in the WQIP. “This plan will spell out management changes necessary to enhance water quality,” Madigan said. “The plan may provide for various practices, such as integrated crop

management, soil testing, field scouting, irrigation water management, waste utilization, range management and conservation cropping systems.”

Assisting USDA’s Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service with the Water Quality Incentive projects will be USDA’s Soil Conservation Service and Extension Service, and local conservation districts and state water quality agencies.

Producers should contact their county ASCS office for further information. The signup period began February 3.

Bruce Merkle (202) 720-8206

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## NEW TECHNIQUE FOR EXAMINING COLON CELLS

WASHINGTON, Feb. 14—Without ever touching a person, researchers can now obtain 20 million living colon cells from that person’s body to study the effects of various low and high-fat diets.

U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist Padmanabhan Nair said the new procedure, which he helped develop, separates human colon cells intact and alive from stool samples using ordinary laboratory equipment.

Nair is a nutritional biochemist with USDA’s Human Nutrition Research Center, in Beltsville Md., studying the relationship between dietary fat and colon cancer.

The current procedure—called colonoscopy—to visually inspect and remove tissue from the colon requires hospitalization and causes discomfort.

“Our procedure can be done again and again,” Nair said. “This will allow nutrition researchers to follow over time the effects of certain diets on colon tissue and possibly other body tissues.”

Each day, the human gastrointestinal tract sheds close to one trillion surface cells, Nair said. Several years ago, he speculated that a significant number of these cells survive intact and appear in the stool, from which they could be separated for a host of studies.

He and colleagues developed a medium that protects the cells from breaking apart and provides sugar to keep them viable as the stool sample is homogenized, filtered and then spun in a centrifuge.

Nair and colleagues Vasantha Iyengar and Althaf Lohani at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, and ARS research associate George Albaugh at the Beltsville nutrition center collaborated in the research.



“We’ve demonstrated that more than 95 percent of the cell survivors are from the colon,” Nair said.

“If we get a stool sample at 7:00 a.m., we can have the cells ready by noon,” he said. Ten grams of stool—about 1/3 ounce—yields up to 20 million living cells. And they represent the entire colon surface—unlike biopsied cells, which are scraped from limited areas.

Once the cells are separated, Nair said, researchers and physicians can run biochemical tests or inspect them under a microscope. They can be used to study the causes of obesity, high cholesterol and diabetes because they are thought to reflect what is going on in other cells in the body.

For instance, studies of the causes behind obesity now use fat cells to see how people may differ in the rate at which they burn fat or carbohydrates. But removal of these cells is painful for the volunteer, Nair said, whereas a stool sample is completely painless.

Risk of colon cancer can be detected by studying specific proteins that pop up on the cells’ surfaces when they are in a precancerous state, Nair explained. The cells are mixed with antibodies that bind only to the specific protein and are tagged with a fluorescent dye.

“You can literally ‘see’ the cells that have the marker proteins and estimate their number by a technique called flow cytometry,” he said.

In future years, physicians may use the cells to diagnose early stages of colon cancer or gauge colon inflammation. Its use as a routine diagnostic tool would require several years of testing against colonoscopy.

“I’m sure others will find many uses for the cell samples I haven’t even thought of,” Nair said.

Judy McBride (301) 504-8932

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## **SUPPORT LEVELS, EXPORT EDIBLE SALES POLICY ANNOUNCED FOR 1992-CROP PEANUTS**

WASHINGTON, Feb. 18—The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Commodity Credit Corporation today announced that the national average support level for 1992 quota peanuts will be \$674.93 per short ton, compared with \$642.79 for the 1991 crop.

The following provisions were also announced:

—The national average support level for additional peanuts will be \$131.09 per short ton, down from the 1991 crop.



—1992 crop additional peanuts owned or controlled by CCC will be sold for export edible use at no less than \$400 per short ton, unchanged from the 1991 crop.

—The marketing assessment for quota and additional peanuts under the 1990 farm bill will be 1 percent of the quota and additional support rates. One-half the assessment will be charged to growers and one-half to first buyers. Growers will be responsible for payment of both the grower and buyer assessment, if they market the peanuts to consumers through wholesale or retail outlets or outside the continental United States.

The Agricultural Act of 1949, as amended, requires that the national average support level for the 1992 crop of quota peanuts reflect any increase in the national average cost of peanut production for the preceding year, excluding any change in the cost of land. It also provides that the quota support rate for the crop may not exceed the support rate for the preceding crop by more than 5 percent.

The national average support rate for 1992-crop quota peanuts was increased from the 1991 level of \$642.79 per short ton, because the cost of producing 1991-crop peanuts was greater than the cost of producing 1990-crop peanuts. The increase was limited to 5 percent.

The price support level for additional peanuts must be set at a level which ensures no loss to CCC from the sales or disposal of peanuts. In determining this level, CCC considers the demand for peanut oil and peanut meal, the expected prices for other vegetable oils and protein meals, and the demand for peanuts in foreign markets. The price support levels are subject to quality and other adjustments.

John Carlin Ryan (202) 720-8207

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## SOIL TEST IDENTIFIES POTENTIAL LEAD POISONING

WASHINGTON, Feb. 19—A growing concern about lead poisoning is renewing interest in a \$10 test for lead levels in soil, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist who worked on the original test.

Rufus Chaney of USDA's Agricultural Research Service in Beltsville, Md., said he expects the number of states offering tests to increase, now that "public awareness of the potential for soil to contribute to lead poisoning of children is rising."

Maryland's Cooperative Extension Service soil testing laboratory recently joined similar labs in Minnesota, Texas, and Wisconsin in offering the test to homeowners for \$10 or less, according to Chaney.

"Children can get lead poisoning from playing in lead-contaminated soil and putting their fingers in their mouths," he said.

Where states don't offer a test, homeowners have to rely on private labs, some of which charge \$200 or more. "The high price makes a test impractical for most people," Chaney said.

Chaney and Howard Mielke, who is now at Xavier University in New Orleans, developed the test in the late 1970's.

Over the years, U.S. Public Health Service offices and industries whose workers are exposed to lead have adopted the test, based on scientific papers written by Chaney and Mielke. Chaney said the test "has become fairly standard with researchers" in the United States, Great Britain and other countries.

In a report last year, Chaney said, that he has found lead levels as high as 5,000 or more parts per million (ppm) in tests of some gardens in Baltimore, Md. Soil with more than 500 ppm of lead is considered hazardous waste by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Lead occurs naturally in all soils, generally in the range of 15 to 40 ppm, he said. But studies have shown that many soils in older cities have accumulated much higher lead levels from years of deposits of airborne paint chip dust and dust contaminated by auto exhaust.

Soil samples in the Chaney-Mielke test are passed through a sieve and placed in a mild solution of nitric acid at room temperature. That solution is placed in a mechanical shaker for one or two hours before being analyzed for lead content, usually with an atomic absorption spectrometer. Another test requires soaking the sample in hot nitric acid for 16 hours, Chaney said.

He said testing accuracy is especially important when measuring for low and high lead levels. "Our test can reliably tell you if you have soils that are safe for children or not," he said.

Robert Munter, the director of the soil testing lab at the University of Minnesota, agrees that the test does a good job of measuring the fraction of soil lead that could potentially enter the bloodstream of a child eating the soil.

"Shaking the soil in nitric acid approximates what happens to soil in a person's stomach," Munter said. "In the stomach of a child, for example, the soil is churned in gastric juices, which are acidic. The



acidic juices free the lead from the soil, allowing it to move into the bloodstream rather than pass out through the intestinal tract.”

Don Comis (301) 504-9073

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## **MADIGAN ANNOUNCES ESTABLISHMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS**

WASHINGTON, Feb. 19—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today announced that rural development councils featuring a coordinated economic development partnership between government and private industry will be established in 34 states and two U.S. territories.

“We have been testing this concept in eight pilot states for nearly two years and the success has been tremendous,” Madigan said. “Based on the success of these pilot states, we are expanding the state rural development council program.”

Madigan said one example of this success is the Kansas Rural Development Council’s work in streamlining the loan and credit application process for federally assisted small business development in the state. Joint federal-state efforts resulted in a standard application form, processing, and credit analysis procedure.

“When fully implemented, this system will save enormous time and money compared to the old system which required small business loan applicants to complete several separate applications and conform to separate credit analyses,” Madigan said.

Another example of a state council’s success has come in South Carolina, Madigan said, where council members identified a rural area that has economic development potential but lacks a sufficient waste-water treatment program. Federal and state agencies combined their financial and technical resources to develop a regional water-treatment project.

As chairman of the President’s Economic Policy Council Working Group on Rural Development, Madigan has overseen the establishment of the state rural development councils.

“When the President announced his Initiative on Rural America, he made it clear that government and the private sector need to work together to get rural America back on track based on locally identified needs,” Madigan said. “The councils are partnerships among business and federal, state and local government designed to address those needs.”



The councils, which are established in cooperation with governors in each state, serve as a vehicle for private and public entities to collaborate and develop local solutions for economic development. All federal agencies operating programs in rural areas are represented as council members. In addition, state and local officials serve on the council, and are commonly joined by the private sector, education, health-care and labor representatives.

As with the eight pilot councils, federal agencies, including USDA, will cover 75 percent of the councils' operating costs; non-federal members will cover the remaining 25 percent.

The eight pilot states are Kansas, Maine, Mississippi, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas and Washington.

Based on progress made in these states, President Bush last October formally invited governors of the remaining states to form councils. Thirtyfour state governors and the governors of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands asked to become part of the rural development council program.

The new councils will be established formally through a memorandum of understanding between each governor and the secretary of agriculture.

Madigan said new councils will be set up by year end in the territories and Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

Thom Rubel (202) 720-4581

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## STATE RURAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS

State Rural Development Councils will be established in 42 states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands by the end of 1992 under the President's Initiative on Rural America. This fact sheet details the formation of these councils and their purpose: to support local economic development in rural areas through a partnership effort by local, state and federal governments and the private sector.

- In March 1989, the President's Economic Policy Council (EPC) formed the Working Group on Rural Development, comprised of sub-cabinet representatives of nearly every federal department or agency, to explore how the federal government might better address rural America's problems.
- In January 1990, President Bush ordered the implementation of the recommendations made by the EPC Working Group, which included the formation of State Rural Development Councils to provide a collaborative partnership between the federal, state, and local governments, and the private sector in each state.
- State Rural Development Councils are collaborative bodies which include representatives from the federal, state, and local governments and the private sector within each state, who collectively assess needs and develop long-term strategies to address those needs.
- Eight pilot councils were established in 1990/91 in Washington, Oregon, South Dakota, Kansas, Texas, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Maine.
- In October 1991, President Bush invited the governors of the remaining states and Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to form new state-federal-private partnerships by creating State Rural Development Councils, and 36 governors expressed a desire to create councils.
- The responses were reviewed by a federal inter-agency task force, which recommended that councils be formed in all responding states by the end of 1992. Based on that recommendation, the EPC Working Group determined to proceed with establishing councils in interested states.
- The new councils will be established through a memorandum of understanding between each governor and the secretary of agriculture, as chairman of the EPC Working Group on Rural Development.
- The federal partners will provide 75 percent budget support of the operating cost for the councils, including an executive director to be selected by each council, and the non-federal partners will provide 25 percent of the budget support.

- The councils do not represent a new grant program, but rather a collaborative use of existing federal, state, local government and private sector resources, based on locally identified needs and strategies.

Thom Rubel (202) 720-5371

Issued Feb. 19, 1992

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# Background

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## HOW THE PRESIDENT'S HEALTH CARE PLAN HELPS FARMERS

**FARM FAMILIES WILL GET** broader health insurance coverage at less cost under the President's health care plan announced Feb. 6. Self-employed farmers who have no employer-sponsored health insurance and who buy their own health insurance can currently deduct 25 percent of their health insurance costs from their reported income. A farm family with \$35,000 income in net farm income paying \$6,000 a year for health insurance can save \$420 in taxes. Under the President's plan, they can deduct all the \$6,000 and save \$1,680 in taxes.

**PART-TIME FARMERS** who are covered by health insurance where they work will be eligible for a deduction of up to \$3,750 (for a family of three). The deduction is reduced by the employer's contribution to the cost of the health insurance. For example, if the employer pays \$3,000 for insurance coverage at the workplace, employees can deduct \$750 of their own insurance cost. If the employer's cost for their insurance is \$2,000, employees can deduct up to \$1,750 of the cost of their own insurance.

**LOW INCOME FARMERS** who are below the threshold for paying income taxes—and who are not covered by a federal health insurance program or by an employersponsored plan—will receive a transferable tax credit certificate worth \$3,750 (for a family of three) that they can use to buy health insurance. As incomes rise above the tax threshold, the value of the certificate is reduced. At incomes of 150 percent of the tax threshold, the value of the certificate drops to 10 percent (\$375 for a family of three). As farmers move up the income scale, they reach a point where deducting the cost of their health insurance on their income tax returns has more value to them than the value of the certificate.

**FARM EMPLOYERS** will be able to get more affordable health insurance for their employees under the President's plan. One way is to enter a network pool with small businesses and individuals for broader

risk sharing and lower administrative costs. Currently, administrative costs for health insurance for a small number of employees can reach 40 percent of the premium, compared with 10 percent for a large number of employees. The President's plan will allow farm organizations to offer health insurance to their members nationwide.

**FARM EMPLOYEES** may benefit because the farm employer can get more coverage for them at less cost. Or they can take their tax credit certificate and supplement the farm employer's insurance with their own. Or, if it's to their advantage, they can deduct up to \$3,750 (for a family of three) from reported income minus anything the employer pays.

**ANOTHER VALUABLE FEATURE** of the Presidents' health care plan is that people can't be denied group coverage because of their health conditions. Insurers must offer coverage to any group, regardless of the health of those in the plan. They can also change jobs and join the health insurance plan of a new employer, regardless of their health status.

Roger Runningen (202) 720-4623

Issued: Feb. 14, 1992

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